

Starks, Huskisson's 'New Fears Eve' strikes distribution deal with Cineverse

BY FREDDIE BOURNE
MESSENGER-INQUIRER

P.J. Starks and Eric Huskisson, founders of the local independent film company Blood Moon Pictures, have been hard at work over the last decade with projects like the full-length horror “13 Slays Till X-Mas” and the “Volumes of Blood” anthology.

Now, the duo's most recent indie horror-comedy, single-narrative “New Fears Eve” will be put out to the masses starting today, Dec. 16, as the filmmakers inked a deal with the Los Angeles-based entertainment company Cineverse for distribution.

The movie is set to be out on the streamer Screambox under Cineverse's horror genre-focused subsidiary Blood Disgusting — which has distributed films from the “Terrifier” franchise, the British psychological horror “Truth or Dare” and the Australian thriller “Crawl.”

It is also slated to be available on Amazon Prime Video, among other platforms.

For Starks and Huskisson, it's a reflection of accomplishment to see all the work that has been put into the project from a number of hands since Starks wrote the first draft of the script in 2021.

“Honestly it's surreal, man,” Huskisson said with a laugh. “(P.J.) and I have been working together for 13 years; and if you would have told me from ‘Volumes of Blood’ when basically he was just pointing and telling me what to do, to us (becoming) partners, and doing three films and talking ... (about) signing with Cineverse, Bloody Disgusting, Screambox and in the same sentence as ‘Terrifier’ — it's amazing.”

Shot between January to July 2023 on a \$93,000 budget — with support from contributors of the movie's Indiegogo campaign — “New Fears Eve” details the story of three best friends and co-workers that become trapped at a New Year's Eve office party while a killer is on the loose.

Known names in the industry have been attached to the project since the film's inception from “Final Destination” creator Jeffrey Reddick, “Sleepaway Camp” cast member Felissa Rose, Hannah Fierman of the horror anthology “V/H/S” and “Scary Movie” star Dave



Photo submitted.

Turner Vaughn portrays the role of Brian in Blood Moon Pictures' horror-comedy film “New Fears Eve.”

Sheridan, along with a number of performers and crew members from the across the region.

Throughout 2024, the movie began making the rounds in the festival circuit following its premiere at the RiverPark Center that June, with screenings taking place at the Chicago Horror Film Festival, the Victory International Film Festival in Evansville, SmoDcastle Film Festival in Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey and the New York City Horror Film Festival at the LOOK Dine-In Cinemas and a showing overseas in the United Kingdom, amongst others.

Following the film's first trailer release in July 2023, Starks and Huskisson received inquiries from a variety of distributors, eventually electing to have the film's colorization and sound be worked on by outsourcing with connections the two received from Reddick in an effort to enhance the movie's overall quality.

However, the pair intentionally held out for the right fit.

“We had a ton of options that we could have gone with,” Starks said, “but none of those deals that we looked at were the ones we wanted. None of those options were the ones we wanted.”

While the pair's previous films have fared well, Starks and Huskisson find “New Fears Eve” resonated with a broader audience because of the balance between the comedic and the horror elements, which Starks attributes to the script being

the most he's personally identified with.

“I wouldn't say everything in my personal life necessarily influenced the idea of wanting to do a slasher movie. I'm just a big fan of the slasher subgenre. ... Even if you look at all of our previous films, the sequences and stuff that I wrote in those, there's always slasher elements in there,” Starks said. “... I'd already come up with the idea about (having) three best friends; ... but by the time I sat down and started writing, a lot of the things that had transpired in my life ... started to influence some of the character arcs ...”

Some of those life experiences included a divorce, his late mother's diagnosis with double-lung cancer and reconnecting with an old friend that he married last September.

“I think by the time I sat down and started writing the script, I used it as more of a cathartic experience to sit down and really be able to talk about things that I had been experiencing,” Starks said. “... I think what it comes down to is — and this is a cliché, but writers write what they know ...”

“I've found that any time that I write something, if I incorporate whether it's personality traits of people I know, or real life experiences or real world experiences (of) something that we've all kind of maybe experienced to some degree, you will be able to connect with the characters more,” Starks said.

Even in the main male characters Brian and Moses,

named after friends of the pair who have since passed, Starks found both to mirror his different sides.

“Brian is definitely the more serious side of my personality, whereas Moses is the more inappropriate, no filter, say anything anywhere-type portion of me,” he said. “... I pulled a lot from not only my personal life, but (also) a lot of the people that I knew and even my own personality traits to create these characters, create the moments throughout the script ...”

Starks and Huskisson said the film was sent to Cineverse — which both said was in part of Reddick's efforts — last year before initial conversations with the company started this past March, followed by months of negotiations.

“It's just (a) major relief,” Huskisson said. “We've been (working) with them since the beginning of March (of this year) until we signed — not knowing what's going to happen.”

“... The day we signed, it was like I took a 10-year-old kid from standing on my shoulders off (me),” Huskisson continued.

While Starks said those who worked on the film and supporters of his and Huskisson's work were patient for the duo waiting out for a bigger distributor, there was more work to be done in securing the film to be on Cineverse's slate.

“... While there was that ‘Yes’ moment, that bit of stress went away and a whole level of stress,” he said. “I'm the technical guy, so I had to start making sure they

had everything they needed. And then (Eric's) on the business side, so he had to start giving them all the legal paperwork.”

Starks also was commissioned to create a new, PG-rated trailer for the film, despite the overall film's adult humor and situations.

Though it took the past six to seven months of getting “New Fears Eve” officially to distribution, Starks and Huskisson's minds are already fixated on the potential future.

“... While it is exciting that the film is coming out, it has to do well,” Starks said. “That's the next level of stress because we want it to do well.”

“... Everybody who's seen it, and really enjoyed it, or is really excited that it's coming out so that they can see it again, we keep getting questions: ‘Is there a sequel? Do you have ideas for a part two?’” Starks continued. “And the answer is yes; but in order for us to do it, we want this to be a success ...”

While Huskisson finds having Cineverse in the duo's corner will help expand the film's reach, he feels its popularity will grow through word-of-mouth.

“It's because of certain things in the movie, that I'm not going to spoil, that I think people will be like: ‘Oh, you have to watch this movie,’” Huskisson said. “I think that's where it's going to take off.”

Starks, who echoed Huskisson's thoughts, said above all, the film is an example of what can be accomplished in one's hometown.

“... The cool aspect (of the film) is that it is made in Owensboro, with a cast of people from Owensboro, crew from Owensboro,” he said. “There are so many landmarks in this film that you will recognize. It's very Owensboro-centric.”

“There's so many things about this movie that even if horror is not your thing, which I totally understand, you're not supporting a genre by renting this — especially if you're from this area,” Starks said. “You're supporting a whole entire group of artists — over 100 people who came together from this area — who have all different walks of life, who have all different types of trades ... that's really what you're supporting.”

COUGARS

FROM PAGE B1

15 points on efficient shooting while also dishing out four assists. Braxton Floyd contributed six points and four assists, and Brooks Lynam added five points on perfect shooting. Gavin Mauzy provided steady production off the bench, scoring four and grabbing five rebounds.

The win showed improved ball movement and balance, with McLean finishing the night with 16 assists. It was the type of response the Cougars needed after a physical district loss earlier in the week.

OWENSBORO — COUGARS CLOSE STRONG AGAINST STORIED PROGRAM

Less than 24 hours later, McLean returned to the Sportscenter to face Owensboro High School, a program synonymous with basketball success in the Third Region.

While Owensboro has endured a challenging start to the season, anytime a small school like McLean County can travel into the Sportscenter and knock off the Red Devils, it should be celebrated.

McLean set the tone early, jumping out to an 8-0 lead and closing the first quarter ahead 15-12. The Cougars carried a 25-17 advantage into halftime, but Owensboro



Photo by Tom Carr Photography

McLean County's Camden Baird pulls up a smooth fadeaway over an Eagle defender during the Cougars' home loss on Tuesday, Dec. 16.

answered in the third, briefly tying the game before McLean regained momentum with a timely three to lead 36-33 entering the fourth. From there, the Cougars executed down the stretch, outscoring the Red Devils 17-13 to secure the win.

The numbers reflected a

confident performance.

McLean shot 53 percent from the field, including 12-of-22 inside the arc and 5-of-10 from three. The Cougars continued their strong free-throw shooting, converting 14-of-16 attempts and controlled the glass with a 24-12 rebounding advantage.

Bozarth again led the way

with 15 points, knocking down three three-pointers and going a perfect 4-for-4 at the line. Groves and Baird each scored 12 points, with Groves adding eight rebounds and Baird handing out five assists. Floyd was efficient, scoring nine points on 4-for-5 shooting while adding three assists. Brooks Lynam contributed across the board with four points, six rebounds, three assists and two blocks in a well-rounded effort.

MOMENTUM HEADING INTO THE BREAK

Taken together, the week told a larger story.

The Cougars faced adversity early, absorbed a tough district loss and responded with two disciplined, efficient wins against quality competition on a neutral floor. The improved shooting percentages, stronger rebounding efforts and continued development of depth are encouraging signs as McLean navigates a demanding early-season schedule.

After a game Monday night against Valley, the Cougars will step away briefly for the holiday break before returning to action Tuesday, Dec. 30, at home against Murray. That contest will serve as a tune-up as McLean prepares for the All “A” regional tournament on Jan. 3, where the lessons learned from a tough December stretch could prove invaluable.

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